



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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Statement by U.S. Rep. Floyd D. Spence (R-SC) **Chairman, House National Security Committee**

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After spending the better part of the year evading the question, the Clinton Administration appears ready to finally own up to the fact that it was never serious about its commitment to limit U.S. involvement in Bosnia to one year. The credibility of the Administration's Bosnia policy will have been dramatically weakened if — one week after the election — the President announces that the U.S. will maintain a significant U.S. military presence in Bosnia beyond the promised one year commitment.

Yet, without any agreement from Congress or visible support from the American people, President Clinton appears poised to once again commit a sizable U.S. military ground force to another peacekeeping operation of potentially unlimited duration.

Many of the original objections to the commitment of U.S. ground troops were centered on the Administration's lack of a realistic plan on extricating ourselves from the operation. One year later, these concerns have been borne out. The Administration still does not appear to have a credible exit plan. The political environment necessary to allow the temporary peace to prevail in Bosnia is nowhere to be seen, suggesting that the presence of significant military forces will be necessary for years.

The United States has more than fulfilled its commitment to achieving a Bosnian peace and it has come at significant cost in both dollars and military readiness. Therefore, I oppose the continued commitment of U.S. ground forces to Bosnia as a central element of an IFOR follow-on peacekeeping force. That is not to mean that the United States can or should walk away from the Bosnia problem. Our interests in NATO and the European continent are too high. However, there are many other ways in which the United States can continue to play a significant role in Bosnia without having to commit thousands of young Americans to serve on the ground as a quasi-permanent human buffer between seemingly intractable ethnic and political forces.